

764
574
[62]
[602] cemetery. It is from this select group that the official wepsin (also orators) are chosen, usually by prearrangement on the basis of closeness or type of kinship bonds and familiarity with the deceased's personal history and family connections. There is always one wepsin from the wife-giving and the wife-receiving group, and in their case the selection is usually unanimous and jocular.

764 It is customary for all present to look upon the dead person as he lies in the uncovered coffin on the flati. Many people do not wish to see the exposed corpse, however, and are reluctant to approach the coffin until it has been closed or is about to be closed. Close relatives and some of the others drop coins and other small articles into the coffin, but the inclusion of the deceased's personal belongings—shoes, hat, ring, trinkets, etc.—is a more formal matter (called *rubit*) performed by the surviving spouse or eldest sibling, to whom the prized objects were entrusted. Accompanying the belongings of the deceased is always a small packet of food. Food is considered a token gift for the spirit's trip to the afterworld, and consists of a few small pieces of meat, bread, fruit, and the like. Supplied in this manner, the spirit will almost surely leave for the world of the dead, rather than be tempted to linger near his house.

[261] On one occasion I witnessed, these items were forgotten until the coffin had already been lowered into the grave. The coffin was reopened and some food placed on top of the corpse. Presumably, the omission occurred because the corpse was in an advanced state of decomposition, causing the mourners to hastily cut the coffin to the burial grounds after the formal wepsin had been delivered. This incident illustrates the importance attached to the inclusion of food for the journey of the spirit and its escape from possible capture by the forces of evil. It also underscores the notion of ritual perfection involved in funeral ceremonies.

764
574
764
574
[62]
[602] While the coffin is on the flati in the communal field, the mourners partake liberally of the food and drink supplied by the immediate relatives of the deceased (man) or the widow. There is always someone ready to pour wine or chicha. Meat is simply provided. The first helpings of food, especially beermeat, are served by the hosts in special portions to the matrifocally

Death and Fertility Rates

Indeed children and the chiefs among the honored guests. These choice servings are reciprocated at some future date by the recipients, provided the structure of any future ceremony warrants it. As an example, should the wife-servicing relations of a dead person attend a funeral of a member of their wife-giving group at some future date, they would be properly received and fed well. But they would not be given better treatment than the wife-givers of the host group. This relative of status is a constant theme among the Mapuche which largely defines their system of etiquette. A man in a relatively inferior social category, even though he were an especially close personal friend, would not feel slighted if his host were to accord greater privilege to someone who was the host's social superior. Such behavior is expected and is understood as such.

The wraque orations are the keynote of the burial ceremony. They are highly laudatory and amount to a recapitulation of the explicit and good qualities of the deceased. Wraque signifies an discourse on a serious note. Therefore, all orators who speak a few words over the corpse are delivering wraque and themselves are wraque or wraque. However, certain male relatives are chosen as official wraque, and these speak rather lengthy orations over the deceased in formalized and somewhat archaic speech. Each delivers an account of the noble qualities of the dead person, speaks of the loss to his family and friends, to the community, and of the responsibility of the survivors, especially the obligations of his children. The wraque traces the genealogy of the deceased to the last remembered ancestor of his patrilineage and ends the virtues of the principal male members on each generation back to the founder. Indeed, as important is this genealogical aspect that it limits the choice of wraque to those relatives who are most closely related to the deceased, regardless of personal friendship. These are the chiefs of the lineage, who would most likely know the genealogical construction, or at a responsible enough status to determine their future initial upon to future generations.

This kind of genealogical construction may take place at any point in the wraque, although it tends to come either at the end, as a summation of the person's good qualities and construction, or in the beginning, as an introduction to them. Through

So
764
57
612
764
57
602
554

764
537

537
764
613

537
764
613
824